NEW CAPITAL WORKS PROCEED AT PORTIUNCULA

By Liam Timmins

€20 million of investment was allocated for Portiuncula Hospital in the latest HSE Capital Plan 2023, detailing new developments and expansions to provide space for patients and its healthcare teams.

Every year, the hospital caters to over 400,000 patients across Galway, Roscommon, parts of Westmeath, Offaly and North Tipperary. With just 157 beds and an average of 22 patients on trolleys each day, Portiuncula has a 40% greater demand than Limerick University Hospital and a whopping 325% demand than University Hospital Galway.

A new 12 bed extension is currently under construction at the existing Outpatient department offering eight new single rooms and two double bedded rooms, all with ensuites included. The expansion will assist staff in infection control, accommodate singles for end-of-life care, and will greatly benefit the Emergency Department during the winter.

The total cost of the expansion will amount to €5.11 million and is estimated to be fully operational in the later end of 2023.

Those walking the hospital will notice ongoing construction of the new €15 million bed ward block on the site. The two-storey building covering 4,038sqm will include 50 accessible single bedrooms with ensuite facilities and will link to the existing hospital. Its flexible ward design will allow the HSE to introduce additional beds in response to demand.

An updated timeframe presented at a recent Health Forum West Meeting now expects it will be completed in the latter half of 2024, as opposed to the mid-2023 estimate in the 2021 planning permission extension.

Ballinasloe's Cllr Evelyn Parsons was unsatisfied with the timeframe of the project, accentuating the emergency departments repeated overcrowding issues lately. Local TD Denis Naughten called on the Minister for Health to include a second 50 ward block as part of the HSE's tender for 1,500 new hospital beds nationwide.

Also included in the Capital Plan are a modular build for ten extra treatment bays in appraisal. Senior management in Portiuncula submitted a request to the HSE for the model, which has been considered by government over three years.

The new bays proposed will relieve pressure on the Emergency Department, as well as offering greater room for staff to operate. Upon visiting the hospital and opening the new CT scanner facility, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar met with ED workers to understand their concerns and request for the new build.

Further capacity in the ED is being assessed, according to the HSE Capital Plan. Development for an Ambulatory Gynaecology unit at the hospital are also due to tender in coming weeks.

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